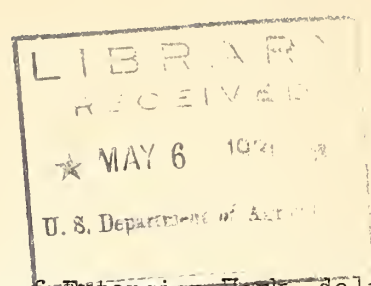


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BETTER FARM HOMES



A radio talk by Dr. C. W. Warburton, Director of Extension Work, delivered through Station WRC and 34 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, April 28, 1930.

Please don't misunderstand the title of my talk today. "Better farm homes" does not mean a criticism, does not mean that our farm homes are now or have been bad. Rather, it reminds us that the farm home, with its rich and honorable traditions and memories, has a past to measure up to, which challenges us like a good 4-H club member, to "make the best better."

Nearly 300 years ago the New World created out of its necessity a new farm home, a new idea in a home for the farm family. As our pioneers went westward they carried with them this new conception, an independent entity set down in the midst of its acres to shelter and nurture those who till these acres, each home bravely remote from others of its kind. Succeeding generations have followed this idea until it has come to be our accepted rule for farm home building. Newcomers from other countries have for the most part followed it instead of building the clustering homes that formed the farm village in the land of their birth. Here in the United States, then, the farm home is an inseparable part of the farm itself, the center of the family's endeavor, the reflection of its accomplishments.

We have lots of courage in this country. We are told it's the courage of youth,— and we need it, for a young country has youth's uncharted future. Three hundred years ago, this courage built on a wilderness coast a six week's journey across the ocean from all that was familiar and assured, the adequate homes that nurtured the makers of our nation. With youth's courage our grandfathers tore down these first crude homes to make way for better ones, not waiting for the slow process of wear and decay to make change imperative. This was one of the early manifestations of the typical American spirit, this breaking away from Old World traditions and discarding something that was still useful to build something better. Carried to extreme, this tendency to tear down old to make way for new, sacrifices too much that is good. Within reason, however, it is a healthy quality in a national spirit which enables it to discard something still usable for something more efficient or more satisfactory, — and then pay the bill. Paying the bill often calls out a bit more than we thought we had in us, makes us work harder and think more keenly. In the end, we are ourselves the stronger for the extra effort. With this spirit the first American farmers produced farm homes which set a high standard for efficiency, measured by the knowledge and facilities of those days, and at the same time they established this precedent for constant improvement.

Our homes are a part of ourselves — we can not separate ourselves from them. This is a convincing and sufficient reason for focusing attention one week each year on the idea of better homes. With this in mind, let us think of the changes directly affecting our lives which have taken place in the last 25 or 30 years. Within this time, people have progressed from the point where they traveled with satisfaction by means of a good horse and buggy to one where they

greet impatiently a question as to whether or not weather conditions favor the fast passenger plane making its regular trip. Thirty years ago we went into town for our mail and for the paper which gave yesterday's or last week's market reports. Now we sit before a dial and tune in on today's market, tomorrow's weather forecast, just as we have in the last few minutes, or listen to a discussion a thousand miles away of economic situations on the opposite side of the globe which may affect American farming in 24 hours. These changes are by no means completed. We shall probably have more of them rather than less. In this business of living, of keeping in step with today, we have no more essential equipment than our homes. If, in the process of speeding up, in the competition daily growing keener, we have pushed our field equipment at the expense of our homes, we must make compensating improvement in the homes or be content with less returns on our investments, physical and spiritual.

I do not mean that farm homes lacking in modern conveniences and arrangements should be torn down and new ones built, any more than I would suggest that every farmer should buy high-priced pedigreed livestock. The extension service believes emphatically in bringing what is on hand up to the highest possible state of production or usefulness and then, as we gain skill and means, to introduce something better--going back again to the 4-H club member's challenge, "make the best better." The extension programs in every State, made by farmers and extension workers in council, reflect this belief. They show, too, the importance attached to the farm home.

Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, whose extension pioneering in the cotton-growing States began in 1903, held constantly to a high ideal for improvement of the farm home. Early in the development of the work he wrote: "It is realized that the great force which readjusts the world originates in the home. Home conditions will ultimately mold the man's life. The matter of paramount importance in the world's is the readjustment of the home." Throughout the South are evidences of his teaching. Southern States and counties have extension programs for better lighting of homes, better home equipment, improvement in planning, beautification of the interior, the exterior, and of the home grounds. Contests in improvement of the kitchen, the bedroom, the living room, in many counties have been thoroughly enjoyed by the participants and interested spectators. Contests in beautification of the home grounds are showing what may be accomplished by the use of native plants with small expenditure and a well-thought-out plan.

Extension workers in the West developed a regional extension program for home management. Projects adopted for emphasis throughout the States were (1) kitchen improvement, (2) installation of water and sewage-disposal systems, and (3) improvements of home furnishings which make for comfort and attractiveness. These workers recommended using to the best possible advantage the material resources of the home and farm -- food, equipment, fuel, clothing, housing; budgeting of money, considering immediate and future needs and basing budgets on records of cash expenditures and of supplies contributed by the farm; utilizing electricity in the home; and wise spending of the money and time available for adding to the comfort and attractiveness of the home.

The extension program for the Central States includes projects for more efficient kitchen arrangement, use of modern kitchen equipment, refurnishing of rooms, house planning, remodeling, refinishing of old furniture.

In 1929 and in 1930, the regional conference of Eastern States extension workers emphasized particularly the question of what constitutes a desirable standard of living for farm families and how the farm business may be developed to meet the standard. County conferences of farmers and extension workers are being held, continuing the study.

Some idea of the interest which is shown throughout the United States in extension projects for farm home improvement may be obtained from the fact that annually about 25,000 farm kitchens are studied and re-arranged for convenience, with the advice and assistance of extension workers; that approximately 50,000 women learn methods of repairing and remodeling house furnishings; that 30,000 farm homes demonstrate methods of improving farm home grounds. These figures do not include the well known contribution of 4-H club members, over 75,000 of whom each year enroll as demonstrators of methods for beautification of home grounds and about 70,000 undertake interior improvements.

This constant striving toward improvement in the farm home is of national interest and importance. It intimately concerns the well being of nearly half of the people in the United States. Also it holds, I believe, the possibility for more general attainment of something nearer the ideal home than we can find elsewhere. Research and development have adapted practically every facility for the home to farm conditions. The farm environment has natural advantages which are beyond the means of the great majority of city families. The farm home may have whatever space the family wishes for its setting. It may have windows looking north, south, east, west, on scenes which the family usually may control and which are almost universally beautiful. It may be of any type which the family chooses and its beauty and fitness are independent of building restrictions; the most modest house may be as attractive as its most imposing neighbor. And all about the farm home lie recreation facilities giving well-nigh irresistible invitation. Can you picture a more attainable ideal?

